



## Election protocols – 2016

### Introduction

District health board elections will be held over a three week period leading up to **Saturday 8 October 2016**.

These protocols apply from Saturday 9 July 2016 to all campaigning activities, whether before, during or after the election.

All candidates (including existing board members) and Hawke's Bay District Health Board staff are expected to follow these protocols.

### 1 Employees of district health boards may stand for election

District health board employees have a statutory right to be elected as a member of a district health board (Clause 7, Schedule 2, NZ Public Health and Disability Act 2000):

“A person is not prevented from being elected as a member of a district health board simply because the person is an employee of the district health board.”

There is a possibility that a conflict of interest could arise during the campaign period, so employees who offer themselves for election to public office must notify the chief executive immediately they do so, and be familiar with Hawke's Bay District Health Board's policies and protocols.

### 2 Election Protocols for Staff

HBDHB is under an obligation to ensure that all employees maintain proper standards of integrity, conduct and concern for the public interest.

It has long been accepted that one of these standards is that staff observe political neutrality when performing their duties as an employee of the DHB.

Staff have the same rights of free speech and free assembly as other members of the public. However, it is an accepted principle of employment law that action taken privately can impinge on an employee's ability to perform their duties. Staff should take care that their statements or conduct as private citizens do not compromise their ability to perform their duties. While important at all times, this is especially important during the pre-election period.

This is particularly important for those at senior levels of the organisation, those who provide advice to elected members or those who have regular dealings with elected members. Other staff should also be aware that these obligations exist, and exercise judgement accordingly.

Staff should take particular care that their statements or conduct during the campaign period:

- are not disrespectful of any candidate or otherwise compromise the ability of the staff member to work with a successful candidate
- do not damage the DHB's reputation
- do not make public any information about HBDHB policies, activities, or processes that are not already in the public domain.

Caution should be exercised when taking part in, or assisting with, any activity in connection with the campaign of any election candidate. This includes organising meetings on behalf of any candidate, assisting with the development of any campaign materials, signing election documents such as a nomination form, canvassing or any other activity that could be seen as supporting a particular candidate.

Staff are entitled to cast an informed vote and should take reasonable steps to inform themselves prior to casting their vote. This might, for example, include researching a candidate's website or public comment on an issue, or attending a candidate meeting. Staff should however take care that:

- a. any activity of this nature does not take place on HBDHB premises
- b. any activity of this nature does not use HBDHB resources (such as computers)
- c. any statements made at or conduct undertaken in the course of these activities do not compromise the employee's ability to discharge their obligations as an HBDHB employee.

During the election period staff may receive a higher volume of queries, especially queries of a politically sensitive nature. Staff are reminded of HBDHB's policies and protocols around communications with elected members, the media, and the public. Generally it is appropriate to observe the same processes and timeframes as would be observed at any other time.

### **3 District health board resources should not be used for campaigning purposes**

District health board resources (including time, computers, email, phones, faxes, stationery, photocopiers, stamps, business cards, notice boards, website or district health board premises) cannot be used for campaigning purposes. Campaign photos must not be taken on district health board sites.

Candidates **must** not link their own facebook page and social media channels (if they are used for campaigning purposes) to HBDHB facebook page and social media channels.

Staff **must** not send or forward emails around the district health board seeking support for a particular candidate or candidates, or use any district health board forum or meeting as a platform for encouraging support (eg district health board public meetings).

### **4 District health board information**

The district health board's website information includes contact details of current board members and these will remain in place during the pre-election period. Following the close of nominations, the candidate profile statements of all candidates will be available through the Hawke's Bay DHB's website.

Care should be taken that district health board publications do not provide an inappropriate high profile for any current board member. This is a matter of judgement, taking into account the spokesperson role of the board chair and the ongoing activities of the district health board.

Where information is supplied by the district health board to a candidate for campaign purposes, it should be supplied to other candidates on request.

## Where to go for further help

- 1 For general information regarding the district health board election processes: [www.health.govt.nz](http://www.health.govt.nz) and search on “DHB elections”.
- 2 For further detail on communications in a pre-election period, see the website for the Report of the Controller and Auditor-General – *Good Practice for Managing Public Communications by Local Authorities*:  
<http://www.oag.govt.nz/2004/public-communications/part1.htm>
- 3 If you are unsure whether or not particular requests or activities are in breach of these protocols, please discuss the matter with your manager or Hawke’s Bay District Health Board's election contact, Ken Foote, Company Secretary extn 4527; 06 873 2159; [ken.foote@hbdhb.govt.nz](mailto:ken.foote@hbdhb.govt.nz) .